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ABSTRACT

This research describes the interpersonal relationship between parents and caregivers in group child care settings, identifies variables predictive of parent-caregiver communication, and examines the degree of congruence in the childrearing beliefs of parents and caregivers. A total of 212 parents and 89 caregivers in 12 day care centers were interviewed. Data analyses revealed that as the frequency of parent-caregiver communication increases, the content of communication increases in complexity and diversity, and attitudes toward discussing childrearing values and parent/family-related information become positive. Variables were identified which appear to have a significant influence on parent communication frequency and which are predictive of caregiver communication frequency. Day care centers with high parent-caregiver communication were found to be characterized by informal social networks among and between parents and caregivers. Both parent and caregiver samples showed considerable variability in childrearing preferences across situations, but intra-consistency when examining parallel childrearing situations differing in social context. Overall there was minimal consistency between parent and caregiver preferences, and the least consistency in situations involving a child's prosocial behavior. A negative relationship was found between parent-caregiver childrearing congruence and center communication frequency. Findings are discussed in relation to a child's construction of the social world and research issues. (Author/JMB)

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THE COORDINATION OF PRESCHOOL SOCIALIZATION:

PARENT-CAREGIVER RELATIONSHIPS IN DAY CARE SETTINGS

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The Merrill-Palmer Institute

Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, Louisiana, March, 1977 as part of the symposium "Studies of the Interface between Families, Institutions, and Children," Irving E. Sigel, Chair.

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The purpose of this research was to (a) describe the interpersonal relationship between parents and caregivers in group child care settings, (b) identify variables predictive of parent-caregiver communication, and (c) examine the degree of congruence in the childrearing beliefs of parents and caregivers. The study is based on theoretical arguments that the nature of parent-caregiver relations affects the quality of children's socialization processes and their adaptive behaviors in negotiating transitions and discontinuities between family and surrogate group care. Parents (N=212) and caregivers (N=89) in 12 day care centers were studied. Data were collected with a structured interview.

A typology of parent-caregiver relationships was developed based on variations in communicative behavior and attitudes. As the frequency of parent-caregiver communication increases, the content of communication increases in complexity and diversity, and attitudes toward discussing childrearing values and parent/family-related information become positive.

Variables found to have a significant influence on parent communication frequency are the attitude that parents and caregivers should discuss family information, use of the center for less than six months, active participation in an informal social network of parents using the same center, and representing a two-parent family. Variables predictive of caregiver communication frequency include center role function, friendship relationships with parents, recent completion of formal education, a child-centered role concept, the attitude that childrearing values should be discussed with parents, and few years of formal experience in working with young children. Day care centers with high parent-caregiver communication were characterized by informal social networks among and between parent and caregivers.

Both parent and caregiver samples showed considerable variability in childrearing preferences across situations, but intra-consistency when examining parallel childrearing situations differing in social context. Overall there was minimal consistency between parent and caregiver preferences, and the least consistency in situations involving a child's prosocial behavior. A negative relationship was found between parent-caregiver childrearing congruence and center communication frequency.

These findings are discussed in relation to a child's construction of the social world and research issues.

THE COORDINATION OF PRESCHOOL SOCIALIZATION: PARENT-CAREGIVER RELATIONSHIPS IN DAY CARE SETTINGS[1, 2]

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I. Overview

The research reported in this paper examines interactions and congruency between families and group child care programs. The study evolved from theoretical arguments that the nature of the interface between these two childrearing systems affects the quality of children's socialization processes and their adaptive behaviors in negotiating discontinuities and transitions between family and surrogate group care.

For most children, involvement in group care represents the first significant experience in a formal social system outside of the familial network. The day care center broadens the child's social world to include a complex system of nonfamilial adults and peers. At a theoretical level it appears likely most children will encounter discontinuities in this multiple-system environment. The argument has been made that the scope and affectivity of human relationships, language and value codes, and the communicative regulatory systems

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[1]This research was funded by grant #750-0447 to the Merrill-Palmer Institute from the Ford Foundation.

[2]This paper summarizes findings treated in greater detail in a report titled Day Care and the Family: A Study of Interactions and Congruency, available from the author at the Merrill-Palmer Institute, 71 East Ferry Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48202.

of the family and child care center may be incongruous and perhaps in conflict with one another (Getzels, 1968, 1974).

The role of parents and caregivers in managing relations between these two socialization agencies is a primary focus of this research. Of specific interest are the day-to-day interpersonal exchanges between parents and caregivers. These exchanges reflect and perhaps determine the compatibility of the family-center systems, and may constitute a significant part of the child's social experience in crossing the boundaries and dealing with differences between family and center.

A second focus of this research is the congruency of day care and family systems. Of interest is the degree of consistency between parents and caregivers in childrearing beliefs and behavior preferences.

Specifically this research addressed three questions: What is the nature of the relationship between parents and caregivers in group child care settings? What factors appear to have a significant influence on the relationship? To what degree is there consistency in the childrearing beliefs of parents and caregivers? The research was designed as an in-depth exploratory study leading to examination of the parent-caregiver relationship in relation to children's social-emotional functioning within the context of multiple-system care.

One-half of the parent population and all caregivers[3] in each of 12 Detroit area child care centers were studied, yielding a parent sample of 212 and a caregiver sample

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[3]Center staff members having 20 hours or more per week of employment at the center and direct involvement with children for all or a portion of their time at the center were studied. This included center directors, assistant directors, teachers, aides and, in some cases, food personnel. The term "caregiver" refers to all of these personnel categories.

of 89. Data were collected with a structured interview in the spring of 1976. Each of the centers enrolled between 30 to 60 children from the ages of 2 1/2 to 5 years on a full-day basis. Overall the parent sample was 52.8% black and 45.3% white; 45.4% was working-class. The caregiver sample was 38.2% black and 58.4% white. Only one parent from each randomly-selected family was interviewed, and the vast majority were mothers (90.6%).

II. Communicative Dimensions of Parent-Caregiver Relationships

The study's conceptualization of the interpersonal relationship between parents and caregivers emphasizes communicative attitudes and behavior. The flow of information between family and child care center is a measure of boundary interaction and also is indicative of types of parent-caregiver relationships.

Before discussing the methodology of this part of the study, it is important to distinguish between dyadic relationships and the dyadic context of interpersonal communication. This study examined the dyadic context of parent-caregiver communication, not established parent-caregiver dyads. The unit of analysis was communication between a parent and a caregiver, but not necessarily the same parent-caregiver combination over a period of time.

The communicative behavior of parents and caregivers was examined in several ways. First, the frequency of communication by topic was measured by asking subjects to indicate on a six-point ordinal scale the frequency of communication for each of 12 items potentially of communicative value to parents and caregivers. These items were developed from a careful analysis of parent and caregiver responses to an open-ended probe during a pilot study (N=47). Seven of the 12 items deal with child-related matters while five deal with parent/family-related issues.

Second, communicative behavior was measured by investigating the system or networks of communication. The study examined the frequency of parent-center contact by different settings and modes, and channels of communication between center and parents.

Communicative attitudes of parents and caregivers were measured by a factor-analyzed instrument developed for this research. The scale measures attitudes toward parent-caregiver discussion of parental childrearing values and expectations of the child care center, and discussion of family-related issues and matters. It also measures satisfaction with the current level of parent-caregiver communication, and parents' perceptions of the child care center as a childrearing/child development information resource. The second type of attitude examined in this study was communication mode preferences. Respondents preferentially rated ten common modes of parent-center communication; five items reflected one-way communication, from center to parent (i.e. printed newsletters) and the remaining five represented two-way communication (i.e. parent-caregiver conference). In addition to differing communication modes, the one- and two-way preferences may be distinguished by the type of information that may be appropriately shared (institutional vs. individualized messages) and the degree of personal involvement required in each.

The following discussion summarizes selected findings about the nature of parent-caregiver relationships.

Parents and caregivers discuss child-related topics with considerably more frequency than parent/family-related topics, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. What the child's day is like at the center is the most frequently-discussed topic by parents ($\overline{X}$=3.40) and caregivers ($\overline{X}$=3.70). At the other extreme, parent's friends are almost never discussed (parent $\overline{X}$=0.35, caregiver $\overline{X}$=0.78). Child-peer relations and child-caregiver relations

are among the more frequently discussed topics in the child domain. The parent's job/school is the most frequently-discussed parent/family-related topic.

An interesting discrepancy exists between parent and caregiver communication frequency mean scores. Caregiver scores are consistently higher than parent scores on each of the 12 items. As expected a t-test on parent and caregiver frequency data found statistically significant differences for 10 of the 12 items ($p < .01$, two-tailed). It may be this discrepancy is due to the influence of the parent-caregiver ratio level. Because there are considerably more parents than caregivers (an average of 10:1 in this study), caregivers have proportionately more persons with whom to communicate than do parents, creating a situation where overall caregivers communicate more frequently than parents but with considerably more individuals.

A strong correlation between communication frequency and the number of topics discussed (hereafter referred to as diversity) was found, suggesting that an increase in interaction corresponds to an increase in the diversity of discussion. For parents the correlation coefficient is .92. The coefficient for caregivers is .91.

The highest frequency of parent-caregiver exchange occurs at the "transition point" when parents leave and pick up their child at the center, according to the parent ($\bar{X}$=4.22) and caregiver ($\bar{X}$=4.61) data.[4] The telephone is a communication mode utilized with moderate frequency. Parent conferences with center staff are infrequent and never utilized by 25% of the parent sample.

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[4]It is interesting to note that of those parents who personally pick up and drop off their child at the center, 29.7% reported they typically do not enter the center premises when leaving their child for the day.

A comparison of frequency data suggests information about the daily interpersonal exchanges between parents and caregivers. The parent and caregiver mean scores for communication frequency when parents drop off and pick up their child are higher than any of the mean scores for communication frequency by topic; even the most-discussed topic (what the child's day is like) has mean scores below the mean scores for parent-caregiver interaction when the parent leaves and picks up the child. This inconsistency is an important one. Perhaps it suggests that parents and caregivers do indeed communicate with one another on a regular basis but the interpersonal exchange is a general, perhaps superficial one in terms of content, not always including one or more of the substantive child- and parent/family-related topics examined in the 12-item communication diversity measure.

It appears there are no established parent-caregiver dyads for nearly one-third of the parent sample (31.6%). These parents do not communicate with a particular staff person consistently; communication is spread among two or more caregivers. The remaining parents communicate consistently with a particular teacher (29.2%) or the center director (32.1%). Channels of communication between center and parent also are varied. The parent's child is the primary source of information about the center for 35.8% of the parents. Other primary information sources are teachers (16.0%), the center director (14.2%)and aides (12.7%).

Informal social networks of parents were found in four of the 12 research centers. While small in number (11.3% of the parent sample), members of these friendship networks interact with three or more other parents using the same day care center at least once a week in private homes, at the center, and in other social settings (i.e. church). These parents discuss the day care center (87.5%), their children (79.1%), their job/school (70.8%) and family activities (62.5%). Many of these parents (70.9%) reported they knew other parents prior to using the day care center.

The study found, unexpectedly, indications of a significant number of friendship-type relationships between caregivers and parents, and caregiver familiarity with parents prior to center use. Nearly one-third (30.3%) of all caregivers reported knowing parents who use the center where they are employed prior to the parent's enrolling their child(ren) at the center. More than one-fourth (29.2%) of the caregivers reported they considered one or more of the parents using the center to be their friend(s). However, in only two centers did more than one-half of the caregivers consider some parents to be friends. Interestingly these two centers also are characterized by informal social networks of parents. Caregivers interact with parents considered friends in settings other than the day care center, and discuss their job/school, childrearing issues, family activities and problems, and the day care center at least once a week.

The informal parent networks and the friendship relationships between parents and caregivers are important variables to be discussed later in this paper.

Variations in communication frequency were examined between and within the 12 research centers. There were two major findings. First, an examination of variations between centers indicated there are statistically significant differences between homogeneous subsets of centers when partitioned by differences in communication frequency and diversity. Second, there also is significant variability in communication frequency among parents and caregivers within most centers. Analyses led to the statistical creation of three subgroups for each sample, labeled low, medium and high frequency. A series of one-way analyses of variance found the subgroups to be significantly different in communicative behavior and attitudes ($p < .05$).

A relationship was found between communication frequency and the hierarchical arrangement of the day care center staff. Variations in caregiver communication correspond

to differences in caregiver role status. The higher the status position within the center, the higher the communication frequency and diversity. Hence, directors are higher in communication frequency and diversity than any other staff role and are followed, in this order, by teachers and assistant administrators, aides and food personnel.

III. A Typology of Parent-Caregiver Relationships

Variability in communication frequency among parents and caregivers led to an examination of differences between subgroups and the development of a typology of parent-caregiver relationships. Specific characteristics of each of these subgroups are discussed in detail elsewhere (Powell, 1977) and summarized in Chart 1. A summary of the patterns and relationships found follows.

The frequency of communication does not appear to alter the type of topics parents discuss most often with caregivers, but there is a relationship between frequency and the number of family-related topics discussed. Four child-related topics are discussed most frequently by each of the subgroups. The topics are: child's day at the center, child's peer relations at the center, child-caregiver relations, and lunch/snack at the center. No matter how frequent parents and caregivers communicate with one another, they are consistent in discussing these child topics more often than other topics.

Communication frequency and the number of family-related topics discussed approach a positive linear relationship. As communication frequency increases, the number of parent/family-related topics discussed increases. Several parent/family-related topics (parent's job/school and family members) reach a frequency level in the high subgroup that places them above the frequency level of several child-related topics.

Parent-caregiver communication also becomes more complex as frequency increases. The number of significant relationships among topics within the two topic domains

increases with communication frequency. Moreover, the number of significantly related topics between the two domains increases as frequency increases, suggesting that separations between child and family content domains diminish with increased communication frequency.

With repect to communicative behavior, then, these topic patterns suggest that the core content of communication, clearly child-related, remains the same despite increases in communication frequency. However, as frequency increases, the content boundaries broaden to encompass parent/family-related information. Further, as frequency increases, child- and parent/family-related topics become increasingly interrelated.

For parents, communication frequency is related to variations in the consistency of parent contact with a specific caregiver. As frequency increases, parent contact with the day care center staff becomes increasingly focused on one particular caregiver. Thus, as communication frequency increases so does the probability of a parent and caregiver forming and sustaining a consistent, stable relationship with one another.

The data indicate a relationship between communication frequency and parent's primary source of information about the center. Not unexpectedly, as frequency increases so does the role of center staff members in serving as primary information sources. As frequency increases, the use of non-staff information sources (i.e. bulletin boards, newsletter) decreases. However, the parent's child as the primary information source does not appear related to communication frequency. The parent's child is a primary information source for all three parent subgroups.

For both parents and caregivers the mode and setting of communication does not alter significantly with changes in communication frequency. There are no marked variations -- except for proportionate frequency increases -- in the use of different communication settings and modes across the three frequency subgroups. Parent-caregiver interaction when parents

pick up/drop off their child at the center is the most frequent communication setting for all six subgroups.

In general, communicative attitudes become more positive as communication frequency increases. For parents, perceptions of the day care center as a childrearing information resource, communication satisfaction, attitudes toward discussing childrearing values, and attitudes toward discussing family information become more positive as frequency increases. One-way communication preferences decrease, and two-way communication preferences increase when communication increases. Caregiver communication and attitude patterns are not similar, however. Communication satisfaction moves from negative to positive when comparing low and medium subgroups, but then becomes slightly negative in the high frequency subgroup. Attitudes toward discussing family information with parents become increasingly positive as frequency increases. Also, attitudes toward discussing childrearing values increase in a positive direction as frequency increases, but not as dramatically as attitudes toward discussing family information. Like parents, caregivers increase in their preference for two-way communication, and decrease in one-way communication preferences as communication increases.

IV. Correlates of Parent-Caregiver Communication

An aim of this research was to identify variables that appear to have significant influence on parent-caregiver relationships. More specifically, the study attempted to identify variables that are predictive of parent and caregiver communication frequency and diversity. There has been little empirical investigation of the correlates or determinants of parent-caregiver interaction, and this research sought to identify variables for further in-depth study. The variables examined may be classified into three categories: organizational, staff and parent. A brief listing of the variables follows; a rationale for their

inclusion in this study and methodology are presented elsewhere (Powell, 1977).

Two organizational variables were studied. One was the sponsorship of the day care center (proprietary, nonproprietary) and the other was the influence of informal social networks comprised of friendship relationships among (a) parents using the same child care center or (b) parents and caregivers from the same center.

Nine staff variables were studied, five of which dealt with educational preparation and years of experience. Variables in this latter category included years of formal education, age of caregiver, special training (i.e. conferences, workshops), years of formal experience in working with young children, and number of years since completion of formal education. Also investigated were caregiver role function (i.e. director, teacher) and communicative attitudes in relation to communicative behavior. In addition, the study examined the influence of caregiver role concept, adapting the following role concept categories from previous research (Prescott, 1964, 1965; Prescott & Jones, 1967): custodial (emphasis on physical aspects of care), adult-centered (teaching children behavior valued by adults), and child-centered (emphasis on self-initiated activities of children).

Eight parent variables were examined. They included socio-economic status, length of association with the day care center, previous day care experience, and communicative attitudes. Also, the study considered the geographical distance of the center from the parent's home and place of work/school, family composition (one- and two-parent family), and the number of centers visited prior to the selection of the present center. Related to this last variable was consideration of the relationship between parents' perceived influence of the day care center on their child and communicative behavior.

Analyses were carried out in two ways. First, the communication frequency and diversity of parents and caregivers were treated as the dependent or criterion variables,

using stepwise multiple regression analysis. Second, the center was treated as the dependent variable, using parent communication frequency to partition centers into statistically different categories labeled low, medium and high frequency centers. Results of the regression analysis will be treated first.

The parent regression analysis revealed more about what variables are not related to communicative behavior than what is predictive of communication. For communication frequency and diversity, prediction equations including all parent variables accounted for only about 27% and 28% of the variance respectively. However, only four variables -- but not the same four -- had statistically significant beta values and contributed one percent or more to the two prediction equations. These variables are represented in Tables1 and 2.

Increases in parent communication frequency are related to the attitude that parents and caregivers should discuss family information (B=.41), use of the center for six months or less (B=.17), active participation in an informal social network of parents using the same center (B=.16), and representing a two-parent family (B=.10).

Not all of these variables were found to be predictive of communication diversity, however. Like communication frequency, increases in parent diversity are related to the attitude that parents and caregivers should discuss family information (B=.32) and use of the center for six months or less (B=.26). Unlike frequency, communication diversity also is predicted by the attitude that childrearing values should be discussed with caregivers (B=.17) and increases in socioeconomic status (B=.11).

It is important to note these variables do not comprise strong prediction equations. The equations account for roughly 24% of the variance separately for frequency and diversity, and the beta values of some of the variables are low.

Perhaps of greater importance is the list of variables that were not significantly related to parent communication frequency and diversity. This includes the geographical

distance of the center from the parent's home and place of work/school, previous day care experience, the number of centers visited prior to selection of the present center, parent's perceptions of the day care center as a childrearing information resource, and parent's perceived influence of the day care center on their child.

The caregiver regression analysis yielded stronger prediction equations and unexpected relationships between specific predictor variables and communicative behavior. Variables with statistically significant beta values and contributing one percent or more to the prediction equation are reported in Table 3 for caregiver communication frequency and in Table 4 for communication diversity. The equations separately account for about 48% of the variance.

Increases in caregiver communication frequency are related to center role function (B=.44), friendship relationships with parents (B=.24), recent completion of formal education (B=-.21) a child-centered role concept (B=.23), the attitude that childrearing values should be discussed with parents (B=.17), and few years of formal experience in working with young children (B=-.13).

Increases in caregiver communication diversity are related to the same predictor variables but with different beta values. Also, the attitude that childrearing values should be discussed with parents is not a strong predictor of diversity; this attitude is replaced in the diversity prediction equation with the attitude that family information should be discussed (B=.12). Beta values are reported in Table 4.

An unexpected finding is the negative relationship between communicative behavior and experience and years since completion of formal education. The finding that more years of experience and more years since completion of formal education are predictive of less communication with parents is inconsistent with the research evidence from public school settings suggesting a positive relationship between teacher seniority and interaction with

parents (Corwin & Wagenaar, 1976). Also noteworthy is that the attitude family information should be discussed, a strong predictor variable for parent communication frequency and diversity, is not as strong for caregiver communicative behavior.

In the second set of analyses where the center was treated as a dependent variable, the 12 research centers were blocked into three homogeneous subsets, based on variation in parent communication frequency, by a one-way analysis of variance with an a posteriori contrast test. Duncan's multiple range test found the three subsets to be significantly different at the .05 level. The low frequency subset includes four centers (parent N=78), the medium subset has three centers (parent N=61) and the high has five centers (parent N=73), two of which are significantly higher in frequency than their subset counterparts.

There appears to be a relationship between the communication frequency of a center and friendship relationships between parents and caregivers. As reported earlier in this paper, two of the 12 research centers had more than one-half of their staff members considering some parents to be friends. These two centers are the two extremely high frequency centers. The relationship is consistent with the finding, reported above, that caregiver friendship relationships with parents is predictive of caregiver communication frequency and diversity. These centers also are characterized by informal social networks of parents. However, two additional centers with informal parent networks are not high in communication frequency; one is in the medium subset and the other in the low category.

The data do not suggest a relationship between center sponsorship and communication frequency. Centers within the high, medium and low subsets discussed above represent varying sponsorship types. Further, a one-way analysis of variance which partitioned the 12 centers by sponsorship type found no significant differences between proprietary and nonproprietary centers when examining communicative behavior and attitude variables.

V. Parent-Caregiver Congruence

The study examined a series of questions dealing with the congruency of parent and caregiver childrearing beliefs and behavior preferences. An interest in the situational and social contexts of childrearing behavior preferences guided the research methodology and data analyses.

Childrearing beliefs and behavior preferences were measured by adapted use of an interview schedule developed by Sigel, Johnson, McGuillicuddy-DeLisi (1976). The schedule consists of 16 critical incident situations with an adult and four-year-old child. Eight situations involve a parent and child in a home setting, and eight revolve around a caregiver and child in a day care center setting. Within each of these two categories four situations are potential teaching situations where the child does not understand a concept or how an object functions; the other four situations reflect child management or prosocial behavior problems. The eight home and eight center situations parallel each other by the nature of the specific problem presented; the only major difference between parallel situations is the social context.

In each situation the child's behavior invites adult influence, although the interview schedule recognizes the "no behavior" possibility. For each situation there is a series of response options that represent different influence technique categories based on the work of Sigel (1960) and Hoffman (1960). For child management situations, the major influence technique categories include power assertion, qualified power assertion, persuasion, suggestion and avoidance; parallel teaching techniques are didactic, qualified didactic, qualified didactic-demonstration, socratic and avoidance.

The data were analyzed in several ways, with selected findings summarized below.

An analysis of response patterns indicates inconsistent childrearing behavior preferences across situations for both samples. Less than 30% of the parent and caregiver

samples prefer the same influence technique for three or more of the eight management situations or for three or more of the teaching situations. The most consistently-preferred technique in both samples is qualified didactic for the teaching situations and persuasion for management situations, but even here less than 30% of the respondents in both samples selected these techniques for three or more of the eight respective situation types. This variability in behavior preferences suggests that for both samples childrearing preferences may be situation-specific, and that congruency between parents and caregivers should be examined in relation to particular situations.

A second major finding deals with the intra-consistency of parent and caregiver respondents; that is, the degree to which parents and caregivers individually are consistent in their childrearing behavior preferences. Do parents, for example, prefer one influence technique in a home setting and quite a different technique for caregivers in a center setting where situations are similar? Does the social context affect respondents' influence technique preferences when the situation is held fairly constant? A series of chi square tests analyzing the differences between parallel home and center situations for both samples revealed considerable intra-consistency for caregivers and to a lesser extent for parents. There is consistency across six of eight parallel situations for caregivers and across five of eight parallel situations for parents ($p < .01$). When compared with the situational variability discussed above, this finding suggests that the situational context (i.e. aggressive behavior vs. dependency inclinations) might have a stronger influence on childrearing behavior preferences than the social context (i.e. home vs. center).

To assess the degree of congruency between parent and caregiver childrearing behavior preferences a detailed coding system was developed that enables the scoring of the level of parent-caregiver congruence within each center by specific situation. Score variations are based on a combination of (a) the degree of consistency among parents and

caregivers within each center and (b) the degree to which the influence techniques preferred by parents and caregivers are consistent. Each center is given a mean consistency score that spans eight situation comparisons.

Overall there is more congruency between parent and caregiver behavior preferences for center situations than there is for parallel home and center situations or for home situations. It appears that within the center context parents and caregivers are more consistent about appropriate caregiver influence techniques than about appropriate parent influence techniques in the home context. Further, there is more consistency for center situations than there is for parallel situations in home and center contexts.

An analysis of parent-caregiver congruence by situation also shows that behavior preferences are least consistent in situations involving the child's prosocial behavior, particularly where the child displays strong independency strivings or withdrawal from social situations. Also, where there is strong inconsistency between parent and caregiver preferences there appears to be a trend of caregivers preferring influence techniques that avoid dealing directly with the child's behavior or question (i. e. distracting child's attention).

There is considerable variation between centers in the level of parent-caregiver congruence, and overall there is minimal congruency between parent and caregiver child-rearing behavior preferences.

There appears to be no relationship between the parent-caregiver congruence level and the communication frequency of a center. An unexpected finding of this study is that there is no positive relationship, and strong evidence of a negative relationship, between parent-caregiver communication frequency and congruence in preferred childrearing influence technique.

IV. Conclusions and Implications

This exploratory study points to numerous found and implied relationships in need of systematic investigation. Two levels of research appear necessary, one focusing on the determinants of parent-caregiver communication and another dealing with the effects of the parent-caregiver relationship on a child's social behavior and development.

The flow of information between parents and caregivers, an indication of the degree of social distance between family and center, suggests minimal direct attempts to coordinate socialization processes. Much interpersonal exchange between parents and caregivers appears to be superficial in content. The "hellos" and "how's it goings" are not to be diminished in importance; many indirect messages may be transmitted in interactions that outwardly appear shallow in substance. When these indirect messages constitute a significant portion of parent-caregiver interaction, though, their clarity and impact are questionable.

The detached nature of the family-center interface also is apparent in the type of information parents and caregivers exchange and in the channels of communication. Parent/family-related topics are infrequently discussed; some topics are never discussed by a sizeable portion of the parent sample. Further, the child is the main channel of communication for nearly one-third of the parent respondents. For many parents there is not consistent communication with one center staff member; interaction is spread among two or more caregivers.

If these research findings are used to construct the social world of day care children, the image which emerges is one of fragmentation and discontinuity. For many children it appears the boundaries of the child care center and family are sharply defined and narrow in intersection. Evidences of system interdependency are few. The world is a disconnected one, with the child's family, other children's families and the day care center functioning as independent, detached systems.

Whether the child perceives and experiences the world in these terms is not known. Further, it is not known how a disconnected or more cohesive family-center relationship affects a child's behavior and development. Lippitt's (1968) theoretical argument that socialization processes are improved when there is close coordination and communication between socialization agencies is in need of empirical investigation.

An important question is what influences the nature of parent-caregiver relationships. This research suggests several variables which deserve further study. One is the attitude that parents and caregivers should discuss parent/family-related topics. Another is the informal social networks of parents and caregivers. There is a relationship between parent communication frequency and active involvement in friendship relationships with other parents using the same day care center. There also is a relationship between caregiver communication frequency and the number of parents the caregiver considers to be friends. Again considering the day care child's social world, it may be that life is significantly different for the child whose parent and caregivers maintain a friendship rather than a traditional client-professional relationship or no relationship at all.

Chart 1 A Typology of Parent-Caregiver Relationships

Subgroups / Communication Variables		DIVERSITY (topics discussed)	COMPLEXITY (topic intercorrelations)
PARENTS	LOW FREQUENCY (N=70, $\bar{X}$ < 1.580)	Child-related core* most frequent; some family topics not discussed; others infrequently.	Limited relationships among topics <u>within</u> child and family domains
	MEDIUM FREQUENCY (N=77, $\bar{X}$ between 1.580 and 2.766)	Child-related core* most frequent; family topics discussed infrequently.	Several relationships among topics <u>within</u> child and family domains
	HIGH FREQUENCY (N=65, $\bar{X}$ > 2.766)	Child-related core* most frequent; some family topics discussed frequently, others infrequently.	Considerable number of relationships <u>between</u> child and family domains.
CAREGIVERS	LOW FREQUENCY (N=27, $\bar{X}$ < 2.170)	Child-related core* most frequent; almost no discussion of family topics.	Limited relationships among topics <u>within</u> child and family domains.
	MEDIUM FREQUENCY (N=34, $\bar{X}$ between 2.170 and 3.472)	Child-related core* most frequent; family topics discussed infrequently.	Some relationships <u>between</u> child and family topics
	HIGH FREQUENCY (N=28, $\bar{X}$ > 3.472)	Child-related core* most frequent; some family topics discussed frequently, others infrequently.	Considerable number of relationships <u>between</u> child and family domains.

*Topics in the child-related core include child's peer relations at the center, child-caregiver relations, lunch/snack, child's day at center.

COMMUNICATION NETWORKS	COMMUNICATIVE ATTITUDES
Child and nonstaff sources are main channels; Few consistent relationships with staff.	Believe strongly childrearing values and family information should not be discussed; Do not see center as child-information resource; Not satisfied with current communication level.
Child and nonstaff sources are main channels; Majority have consistent staff relationship.	Mildly believe childrearing values and family information should be discussed; Do not see center as child-information resource; Slightly satisfied with current communication level.
Child and staff are main channels; Majority have consistent staff relationship.	Believe strongly family information should be discussed; childrearing values should be discussed; Perceive center as information resource; Satisfied with current communication level.
N. A.	Believe strongly childrearing values and family information should not be discussed; Not satisfied with current communication level.
N. A.	Believe strongly family information should be discussed; Mildly disagree childrearing values should be discussed; Satisfied with current communication level.
N. A.	Believe strongly childrearing values should be discussed; Believe family information should be discussed; Slightly dissatisfied with communication level.

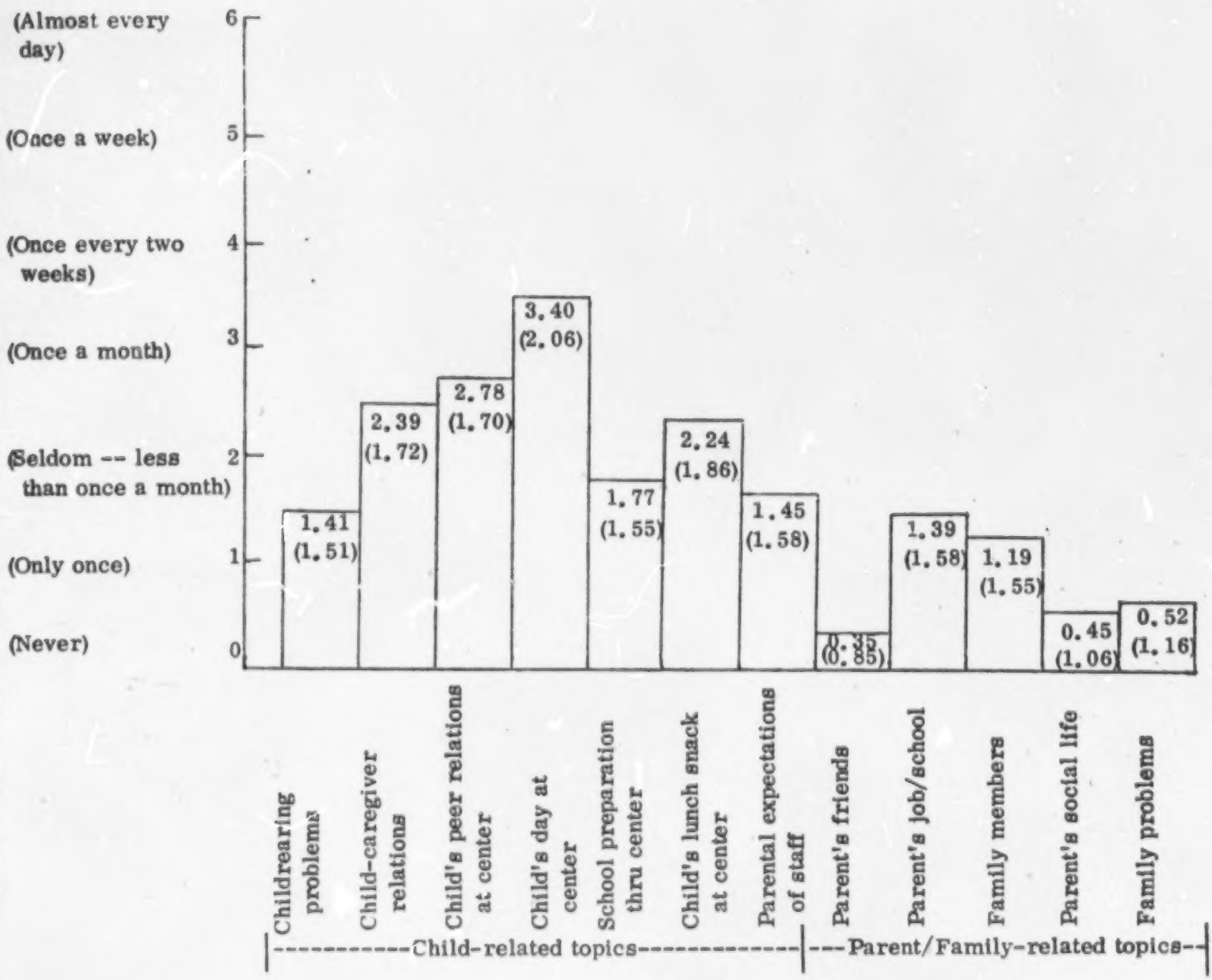

Figure 1 -- Mean and standard deviation (in parentheses) scores for parent reports of parent-caregiver communication frequency by topic.

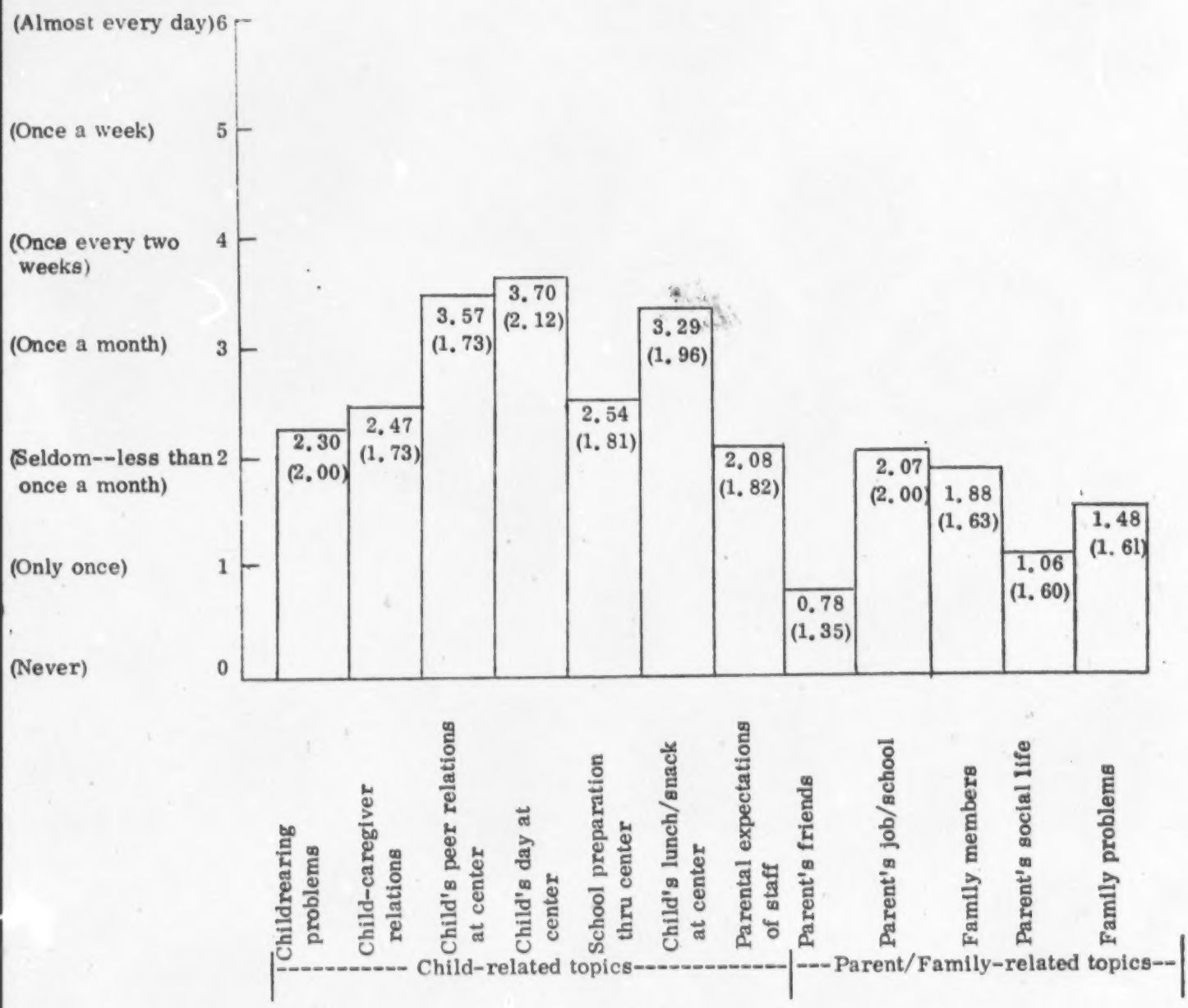

Figure 2 -- Mean and standard deviation (in parentheses) scores for caregiver reports of parent-caregiver communication frequency by topic.

Table 1

Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables Predictive of Parent Communication Frequency

Independent Variables	Parent Communication Frequency	
	Beta Weight	Contribution to R^2
Discuss Family Information (attitude)	.407	.15
Length of Association with Day Care Center	.175	.04
Member of Informal Social Network of Parents	.169	.03
Family Composition	.108	.01
R^2		.24

Table 2

Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables Predictive of Parent Communication Diversity

Independent Variables	Parent Communication Diversity	
	Beta Weight	Contribution to R^2
Discuss Family information (attitude)	.323	.12
Length of Association with Day Care Center	.261	.08
Discuss Childrearing Values (attitude)	.178	.03
Socioeconomic Status	.109	.01
R^2		.24

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables Predictive of Caregiver Communication Frequency

Independent Variables	Caregiver Communication Frequency	
	Beta Weight	Contribution to R^2
Center Role Function	.442	.28
Number of Parents Considered Friends	.246	.06
Years Since Completion of Formal Education	-.212	.06
Role Concept	.232	.05
Discuss Family Information (attitude)	.167	.02
Years of Experience in Formal Work with Young Children	-.127	.01
R^2		.48

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables Predictive of Caregiver Communication Diversity

Independent Variables	Caregiver Communication Diversity	
	Beta Weight	Contribution to R^2
Center Role Function	.363	.25
Role Concept	.324	.07
Years Since Completion of Formal Education	-.281	.08
Number of Parents Considered Friends	.208	.04
Years of Experience in Formal Work with Young Children	-.133	.01
Discuss Childrearing Values (attitude)	.116	.01
R^2		.48

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